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SOME WHOLESOME HUMILIATIONS OF THE MODERN CHURCH

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Wholesomeness of humiliation the church shares with every other beneficent institution of a progressive age. Progress connotes dissatisfaction with every attainment. Progress moves by experiments, most of which fail; and by the vexatious process of elimination the discovery is lit upon. Progress means disillusion unto the hope that cannot be put to shame, ambitions thwarted unto ends sufficient to the soul. The greater part of advance is to retrace impracticable paths in penitence and tears, so regaining the road to the Celestial City. Wholesome humiliations mark an age of progress, and the church in an age of progress.

Proud science has learned her wholesome humiliations. They are recalled by the centenary of the chief man of science. His announcement of natural selection delivered the all-interpretative principle of evolution from formless speculation and undefined hypothesis into scientific definiteness, replaced the static by the dynamic universe of thought and things. Yet Darwin's principle is confessed to be but one element among others, mostly unknown, in biological evolution, which it can neither demonstrate nor explain. With chastened humility science has set herself to experiment afresh, and will hardly believe that she is progressing toward an interpretation of life except by disclosing the inadequacy of every interpretation submitted. Such blended advance and failure have long antiquated the attempt of science to solve or to dismiss the ultimate mysteries; she is grateful to bring her humble contributions of material toward their partial solution. Science has reached the stage of humiliation, therefore of sure progress.

The same wholesomeness of humiliation is in modern industry, which exulted in its manifolding of productive and distributive powers. At once followed the consternation of new forms of material

and moral misery. The Manchester School's pomp of yesterday is one with Nineveh and Tyre. To the moles and the bats has been cast its arrogance of unmodified—I do not say unrestricted—competition. Humbly the world of commerce and industry confesses its discredited dogmatism, accepts a new spirit and method, with lowly docility sits at the feet of things as they are, seeks its goal not in the existing social organization which it confesses to be no more final than the feudal system, and sets its face not in the direction of any fantasticalness, but toward the economics which can be won only by chastened experiment.

So in art, in politics, national and international, in education, in reform, in all our life and thought, we have reached that potentiality of achievement which is marked by humility. The wholesome humiliations of the church also are her brightest augury. We may turn without regret from exaggerated reminiscences of the fabled ecclesiastical Paradise, when the multitude sought the place of dogmatic ignorance without regard to the quality of edification received, and departed with an inspiration to righteousness and happiness demonstrably less than that which the church gives society today; when the parson was parish pope, ruling in the fear of hell and by the authority of pretense; when the church spire dominated home and shop, as sky-scraper and factory chimney now dwarf the church spire, but not the heaven it points to; when the rivals of the church's beneficence and mischief were not full grown. It is better to live in a humbled church than in an arrogant church, notwithstanding all the failures and contempts that have been slippery steps down into her valley of humiliation. Better than to lord it over the world is the church's office of a servant to wash the dusty feet of the servants of humanity. In the church's abasement is more dignity than in the self-exaltation of former days, and steady progress toward the all-subduing influence of the Lowliest, in whose name she serves.

The humiliation of sectarian divisions is wholesome in forcing them to an end. But to what end? Sects were historically necessary to save religion from corruption and to bring to light neglected essentials of Christianity. It is the humiliation of the church that the offense of sectarianism must needs come, but it were a deeper humiliation if the offense should pass away without accomplishing the design which

overrules even this for good. To turn back the heterogeneity of Christian life and thought to homogeneity is the reversal of evolutionary process. From that degeneracy the offense of sectarianism must needs come again with a deeper woe to those through whom it comes, to escape the recrudescence corruption and incompleteness. A higher integration of Christianity through the existing sect differentiation is the only progress. Principles and experience so hardly achieved by the different branches of the church, often so sacrificially attained, must not be renounced in order that the church may be not one but a fraction.

Added to the original humiliation of the necessity for sectarianism is the self-assertion of each sect in exclusiveness and uncharitableness. This has largely annulled the relative justification for the sect, has devitalized it, has fixed it in antiquated forms. Each sect has urged its divisive name against other developments of the Christian spirit, to the incalculable loss of Christianity, and has so renounced its own reason for being. In places great and small, especially small, the church is split into futile fragments, dissevered, discordant, belligerent. "Come and be our pastor," was the incentive from a rural church to a young minister, "and we'll clean out them Methodists." In response to a letter from an educational society requesting a pastor in a New England college town to recruit the depleted ranks of the ministry from the students in his care, the answer was received, that his best was being done, but this is a college whose students came mostly from rural districts, where sectarian divisions take from the ministry, as most of these young men witness it, its dignity, attractiveness, and power; and that the way to begin the desired recruiting is to remove sectarianism and foster religion in rural communities, these efforts being one and the same. Arguments to the fit among these young men to enter the ministry may be never so cogent; what power have words against the things they have seen from childhood? The reason indicated, rather than worldliness, turns away many of our best-adapted young men, living in the ministry's best recruiting ground, from the calling whose attractions should be irresistible. The deterrent is not that most of the work of the ministry must in any case be done in inconspicuous positions and for scant reward, but that the ministry in a large proportion of cases lacks free field.

In the same college, long noted for its strong religious influence, and with a student body drawn mainly from the best American country stock, less than 50 per cent. of its young men are professed Christians, and the proportion at entrance is still smaller. This is a much lower proportion than is common in colleges more generally recruited from cities and larger towns. Said one of the leading students of the senior class, who had recently been brought into fellowship with a church of the college town, "In my place of 1,200 inhabitants there have been four Protestant churches. None of them appealed to me. It is the same with most of the students."

In this college, which is an excellent field for the observation of the best country youth, there is a marked contrast between the strong and fine characters of the students generally, and the prevalent lack of a deep religious interest, even among those who entered the college professed Christians. The religious conceptions of weak sectarian churches have little in common with the expansions of college life.

Such observations illustrate the important fact that the religious problem of the rural districts not only includes the factors of shifting population and changing social conditions, but must also face the increasing loss to church and religion of the soundest characters and the most adventurous minds. Now that public attention is turning from a too exclusive occupation with urban conditions, to include the sources of national life in field and mountain, and the interests of farmer folk are engaging as earnest inquiry as are the forests, the streams, and the soil, surely the dividing and narrowing of rural religion bulks large among national perils. Sectarianism is losing for the church the finest and best of the country youth. With them it is losing other young life of which they are leaders. The marked religious losses of rural America are largely due to this curse, and moral deterioration follows inevitably.

If we turn to the frontier, and there is still a broad frontier that winds for thousands of miles of valley and mountain, our humiliation may be somewhat mitigated to find sectarianism not as rampant as is popularly supposed. The traveler on a transcontinental line who is scandalized to see town after town infested with church spires just tall enough to catch the eye, is not always informed that some

stand for languages of new immigrants, and that nearly every one may represent several out-stations.

A ministerial force considerably smaller could not meet the demands of the field thus understood, though this force might be organized with incomparably greater efficiency. Among towns off these main arteries, many have but one English-speaking church. In one new western state, over 85 per cent. of the home missionary churches of a certain denomination are in places where no other church offers Protestant Christianity in the English tongue. If the out-stations are also reckoned, the percentage is much higher. Making allowances for conditions too complicated to be described here, and reflecting that most churches in that state are home missionary churches for reasons that seem imperative, the record is almost unexceptionable. On the other hand, there is in that state a prominent denomination which, up to 1905 at least, and presumably up to the present time, has never planted a pioneer church among a white population.

Sectarianism on the frontier is most malignant where sanguine expectations of municipal growth have been disappointed and at the same time the adjacent districts have grown to the necessity of having churches of their own. The situation is worse after the pioneer stage has been passed. Contributors to home missions of the broader-minded denominations in the new West, may be assured that their contributions work incomparably more good than harm and are indispensable. Yet the demand in the Canadian Northwest for a united pioneering of Presbyterians, Methodists, and Congregationalists, driven together by the magnitude of the task, discloses the waste in other new fields, of toil, money, and souls of men.

The mission work of our cities, especially among immigrants, demands churches for the poor, the ignorant, and the unstable, so largely equipped, so efficiently and variously manned, that they may lay beneficent hands upon every element of the life of these, the pitiful and appealing. This demand is rarely met, for it usually requires a united effort that sets redemption above denominational vanity.

Most fortunate is the rural church which stands without a rival in its field, and is led, as such churches usually demand to be led, by men strong spiritually, intellectually, and practically. Whatever

the limitations and depletions, these churches are eminently the leaven of the nation's life. Cursed be he who divides such a church! Blessed be they who increase the number of them!

Many churches in cities and large towns are so happily placed that they feel little of the grind and repression of sectarianism. But when such a church looks away from its own good fortune and sees the need of a social uplift upon the community, and appeals to the local sisterhood of churches to join in a united effort, without which only slight and transient results can be secured, she finds multitudes of Christian people to whom the opportunity makes slight appeal, though the spirit of the age demands it, and who are oblivious of whatever does not directly and exclusively build up their own conventicle.

In spite of all, the spirit of unity is in the air, but the effort to obey it involves new humiliations. "Let us come together," say the Pope and the Lambeth Conference, "in the repudiation of your convictions, the denial of your Christian experience, the contempt of your history." Or, let both sides make concessions! That seems fairer. So the aborted triunion of Congregationalists, United Brethren, and Protestant Methodists attempted a platform containing a creed to which a considerable minority of the largest of these denominations could not easily subscribe. The Canadian attempt at union of Presbyterians, Methodists, and Congregationalists has reached the stage of a doctrinal confession which seems to Scotch conservatism the repudiation of the gospel, and which also seems incongruous with the religious advance of our age. As if the unity we seek were of opinion and formula! Or as if a conformity secured by such compromises must not force new divisions by the same necessity that bred sects out of the mediaeval church's corruptions! Or let us unite in federation! And that great organization which at its late convention at Philadelphia represented 18,000,000 American Christians, began by excluding liberal Christianity, and continued, as a necessary corollary, by resolving to foist occidental denominationism upon foreign mission fields. What varieties of Christian faith and life the Orient may develop must be left to the future. But the imposition of American sectarianisms has for the Orient no historical justification nor practical benefit. The attempt has long proved

futile, but there are some to whom even contemporary history teaches nothing.

The hope of better things is proportionate to the depth of this humiliation, as the outside world vents its scorn of sectarian divisions, insensible though the world is to their origin and significance, and as the church's self-contempt increases and her consciousness of insufficiency to opportunities towering before her. The humiliating failures of attempts which aim at conformity instead of oneness of spirit, make evident that neither creed nor liturgy nor polity can bind us. Variety is essential to unity. Unity signifies a rich manifold of thought, feeling, endeavor, to be harmonized. The failure of unity by those perversions which are most alien to it, by concession, compromise, restriction of any impulse of the free spirit of Christianity, by repudiation of valuable elements of Christian experience in disloyalty to their historic causes, demonstrates that Christian union is to be advanced to, not returned to, and that the one church of the future must embrace all that the spirit has brought to pass in all branches of the church.

The sufficient impulse to this true unity is that service and regeneration of society which is opening a new era to the church. The necessity of united effort to save individual souls as such has not been apparent, and this individualism, like every other, breeds division. The vision of society to be saved, and of souls to be saved in their social relations, apart from which there is neither salvation nor a soul worth saving, socializes, unifies the forces that would save. To accomplish social salvation not a single hard-won power of Christianity can be spared, nor can any of these powers dispense with the co-operation of every other. This social service makes a united church. As fast as it is undertaken, Christian forces, however variant in tradition, rush together to destroy social wrongs and to accomplish social redemptions. This is unity in Christ, the author and perfecter of the social gospel. Here is ample place, not for denominational concession, but for denominational self-forgetfulness. The sect that can most deny itself to serve, whatever becomes of its name and external appearance, finds its inmost spirit amply realized in the unity of the higher Christian service, gains the decisive leadership, makes the principal contribution. The unity of this common service unseals

to the united toilers the universal springs of faith and joy and power. Christ's prayer for the unity of his disciples is the supplication that they all may be one "As Thou, Father, art in me and I in Thee;" one in the largeness of the divine purpose, therefore one in the unrestricted reception of the divine Spirit.

The humiliation of the church in the futilities of her sectarianisms is but an instance under a humiliation which is nothing less than the failure of her essential and distinctive mission. Every amendment wholesomely taught by the less humiliation is a light healing of her deeper hurt. As we face that, it may be well to fortify ourselves by encouraging reflections of her eternal beneficences, now as always, to multitudes of souls whom she saves, comforts, energizes; of her indispensableness to all that is sane, pure, strong in our civilization; of her notable achievements, recent and contemporary, especially as a world-wide missionary church in this day of the receptiveness to her gospel by oriental civilization and African and Oceanic savagery. It is no time for discouragement, which is indeed the repudiation of her faith. Yet, these encouragements must not be perverted to satisfactions with her present conditions. They add to us strength to bear her humiliation, a steadfast mind to estimate it, assurance that wholesomeness shall be worked out of it. This is her uttermost present humiliation: failure to lead the world's thought and to shape the world's life.

Failure to lead the world's thought and to shape the world's life—this is failure unqualified. The entrustment to the church of the gospel of eternal wisdom and power, by which the vision of man is opened to the highest truth, the will of man set free to the divinest perfecting, compels the church to assert this leadership, to realize this transformation. To be of only some incidental benefit, to be but one of the many voices that call the world on, is to fail of that for which the church was sent into the world.

To look first at the first element of this twofold humiliation: the failure of the church to lead the world's thought. For centuries this demand was a specious success. Such success was turned into inevitable shame when the rebellion of the modern world against ecclesiastical prescription swept western Europe out of mediaeval darkness into the light of the enfranchised human spirit. The history

of the church since then, both Catholic and Protestant, has been a losing fight for the lost leadership. From such humiliation this wholesomeness must be extracted—the repudiation of a leadership that represses; the rediscovery of a leadership of intellectual progress and spiritual liberty.

The church must concede, rather contend for, unrestricted investigation and reflection in every realm. The church must acknowledge, rather exult, that innumerable streams which water the garden of humanity flow not from Judean hills. Neither science nor philosophy, neither art nor culture, neither statecraft nor industrial organization, is the creation of her Christ. The Greek spirit, sweeping into itself the attainments of hoarier antiquities, and absorbing in its progress the genius of every wisdom save one, sets over against the church that intellectual creation which she must indeed transform, but not one jot or tittle of it may she destroy. To attempt to hinder that force is to fight against the stars in their courses. The result is failure and humiliation as complete as deserved.

The centennial of Darwin emphasizes the futility of the endeavor. It is difficult to understand why the church's battle against science was not even more disastrous. The most obvious explanation is that no bulletins of the Waterloo reached those of her adherents who were absent from that slaughter. Still between science and the theology most current is an antagonism which is less than fatal to the antagonist of science because the campaign is a continual evasion of battle. Churchmen to whom the question of the rights of science in her own sphere is not even a memory must not be deceived on this point. It is probable that with the majority of American Christians today the name of Darwin arouses feelings similar to those once inspired by Voltaire, seeker of truth, and Paine, lover of men. An after-dinner speaker thus counseled the graduating class of a progressive theological seminary: "You young men may have heard of evolution. Do not waste your time over it. I have read all that has been written on the subject and there's nothing in it." Not on that day alone did those young men encounter this spirit.

If we turn to the little circle of progressive churches, which we hope to see leading the church generally into leadership of the world's thought, we cannot be enthusiastic over their fitness for the respon-

sibility. The same fatal antagonism to science and the free spirit of progress is only less extreme in them. I speak of "evangelical churches," so called. A word concerning the position of "liberal churches" may be appropriate later. For example, the phrase, "the higher criticism" is gaining increased respectability among these churches of our wavering hope. Yet the unlimited application of historic method to everything in the field of history is not yet axiomatic even to those ministered to by men of the historic spirit. When the principle seems admitted, its implications are little understood. To be ready to acknowledge the different strata of the Hexateuch, and even of the Synoptic Gospels, to concede the element of error in testimony and tradition, the presence of myth and folklore in the Christian Scriptures, this is not necessarily to apprehend the revolution wrought by modern historic science in the significance to us of the literary origins of the Christian faith. It is indeed true that many in these churches, and many less instructed, have drifted from the old traditions into fogs of uncharted seas. But this is an equal failure to grasp the historic interpretation of Holy Scripture. It is also true that certain members of these churches feel the momentous change as a deepening, broadening, and clarifying of faith. But their attitude is individual, and the churches in which many of them keep silence, stand generally for ancient notions of the Bible, considerably modified, indeed, but by no means revolutionized by historic science in alliance with this deeper faith.

The Old Testament is to faith illumined by history, the record of a struggle upward from cult of ancestors and nature worship, which are recrudescence even in the mightiest prophetic efforts to escape them, and is all the more therefore a revelation of God's redemptive and educative power. This faith and knowledge recognize, without offense to St. Paul's incomparable intellect, spirituality, and practical genius, his vulgar metaphysic, his mythopoeic fancy, his Jewish puerilities and dogmatisms, encasing what God in Christ means for creation of faith and regeneration of character. The Fourth Gospel is understood in its unhistoric quality and in its unfolding, though more or less in forms of a philosophy now long dead, of the eternal significance of Jesus. In the Synoptics the more legendary elements are distinguished from the testimony that goes back close enough for

practical purposes to the originality of Jesus' thought and the rationality of Jesus' deed. Our Lord himself is recognized, for the deepening of faith in him in whom God comes to us and we come to God, as the child of his time—so the divine in the human must be—as well as the son of eternity, thinking the universal in forms which future generations of believers must enlarge or even lay aside. There is felt in every word of our sacred Scriptures an accent foreign to the world's later ages, and therefore all the more expressive of reality ultimate and universal. Such conceptions, of which this expression stands subject to every thoughtful man's correction, set the Christian origins into continuity with the universal process of religious evolution. Instead of a letter that kills by its repressions, we have the inexhaustible source of the Holy Spirit whose testimony of Christ is the unfolding of his thoughts into ever-deepening truth, of his life into ever-enlarging power. To how few evangelical churches, as churches, are such conceptions acceptable!

Yet it is the aloofness of the church from the temper of present thought, more than her antagonism to it, that militates against her leadership. In how different a world of religious conception, if not of spiritual life, from that of the modern church do we find ourselves as we read Browning, Royce, Martineau. When we confer with the spiritually minded who think as the genius of the age compels, we are in another atmosphere from that of the prayer-meeting, the Sunday school, and the usual religious convention. The regnant principle of modern thinking, not to say of all actual thinking, is continuity. The inveterate tradition of the church is discontinuity. Not till the church speaks the language of that other principle will she have a message for the modern world. The confusions of the world's contemporary thinking are due to men standing at innumerable points of view of the continuous universe of thought and things, not to any divergence from this principle, which is common to idealist and materialist. Even pluralism bears witness, as a child that threatens to devour its parent principles. A religion therefore which makes discontinuity between God and man, God and Christ, Christ and man, God and the world, which makes Christianity one religion against others, which divides the sacred from the secular, or sets spirituality apart from any normal development of the human spirit,

is a religion which can do no business, in this age at least. Christianity as the consummating synthesis of all aspirations, all activities, is the Christianity coercive upon this time and all times.

This principle of continuity, formulated by the few, is unconsciously the test of truth applied by all men, learned and unlearned, who feel the spirit of the time. It means to them the appreciation of everything that is normal to humanity, eager sympathy at least with whatever the mind of man can grasp, the heart of man rationally enjoy, the will of man reasonably set itself to achieve. It means also the refusal to apply in the religious realm principles that do not apply in the home, the market-place, the polls. It means the rejection of a gospel that is not continuous with secular interests.

The increasing vogue of an evangelism which stands aloof from this spirit is a peril to the church's ultimate influence upon the age. The danger is not in evangelism. What is live Christianity but evangelism? Nor should our criticism of the current type of it be frittered away in objections to this or that detail of method. The peril is the current type of evangelism and the dominant type of evangelist. "I felt my soul shriveling and shriveling," confided a devout woman, as she came out of an evangelistic meeting of phenomenal success. As one sits upon the platform at such a service, trying not to think of mob psychology and ultimate results, and sees throngs crowding to the altar, two pictures intrude upon his thanksgiving and perplex his ardor. One is the stream of the world's thought and life flowing by unheeding. The other is the growth of a type of Christianity, if we call it that, which in its emotionalism and dogmatism, which ever combine, sets religious forces at a still further remove from the main currents of the world's progress. The infrequency of the note of the social consciousness, the all-but unbroken silence concerning Jesus' message of the kingdom of God in the world, the shunning of the finer and larger things, these are indications plain enough. If it be answered, "The business of the evangelist is to save souls; he hands them over to others to educate," surely the beginning must not be in contradiction to the development. If it be said, "We declare the fundamental only; we leave to others the higher ranges of the gospel," must not the foundation be adequate to the superstructure? If it is urged, "We deal only with the sim-

plicities," this is simplicity—the whole of life filled with the spirit of Jesus. The historic revival movements which issued in failure and degeneracy, such as "the great awakening," followed by the lowest religious declension which our nation has ever seen, or such as the waves of mediaeval sensationalisms, repressed thought, and narrowed life. The evangelisms which permanently strengthened the church and left a lasting imprint upon society have been expansions of all human powers. Such was the evangelism of Jesus, of St. Paul, in principle, if not altogether in form, of the Lutheran and Wesleyan reformations, of the movement in America—I speak of its beginnings—at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which saved this land to Christianity, of that contemporary ethical, social, and increasingly spiritual awakening which is more properly evangelistic and revivalistic than the efforts which monopolize these names.

In strange contrast and similarity with the church's more obvious aloofness from the thought of the time is the inspiring, depressing, perplexing influence of Albrecht Ritschl and his followers upon many of the church's leaders in Europe and America. The names of Ritschl, Harnack, Herrmann, and Kaftan suggest the restoration of the original gospel, the living word, stripped of the accumulated encumbrances of the ages, accessible to the critical investigation and the practical and social spirit of our day. These names also suggest in their overstrained earnestness to distinguish the eternal gospel from the passing phases of history, a certain antagonism to philosophy and culture, and a radical severance of Christ and his work from the process of the world's religious development. We seem for the present at least to be worse off in influence upon the world with these great men than without them. Must the highest and purest religious consciousness possible in the church today alienate the church from the spirit of the time even more than does the current type of evangelism?

The leadership of the world's best thought and culture by a gospel sympathetic with them—no task is more urgent. The church has scamped this work in Germany, and last year 10,000 persons in Berlin alone underwent the troublesome and embarrassing procedure of withdrawal from the state church, separating themselves from organized Christianity. If the great anti-Christian movement,

of which this is but one symptom among many, be ascribed to differences between the dominant elements of the German church and the political unrest of the German people, or also to the materialization, not, however, as real as apparent, of that people which has more than once been the torch-bearer of the world's idealism, all specific reasons resolve into the one. The church has notoriously repudiated this task in France, and the noblest French literature, representative of the best French sentiment, associates Christianity with resistance to personal and social aspirations. Throughout continental Europe the intensifying antagonism is reducing to despair those who identify Christianity with dogmatic reactionism. Similar disasters threaten in Great Britain and America, for the same reason, the aloofness of the church from the thought of the age.

It is a false humility that replies, Let us be content to leave the wise and understanding and declare God's message unto babes. Verily to the unsophisticated mind and simple heart did Jesus direct his evangel. But it was a gospel of profoundest thought and directed to the inmost spirit of his time. And there needs also to be distinguished the smug and paltry Jewish scholasticism of those wise and understanding, from the unresting science and the unsatisfied advance of our own time. This spirit is in the unlearned and poor of our day, who are fruitful soil for the gospel. To ignore this spirit in them is to be as false to them as to the master-minds whose influence descends to them. Lose one man who knows how to think—and his soul is also worth saving—and you lose a multitude that are more or less affected by his thinking. You lose the spirit and current of the time. There is no speaking to the hearts of men except as you address mind also, from which no normal exercise of the heart can be separated. And if one cries out for simplicity—reason is simple and unreason is confusion. Simplicity is not in the repetition of phrases indefinite or self-contradictory, nor even of those phrases whose associations are peculiarly sacred and moving, for a vain repetition empties them of even their associations. Even such words as "Come to Jesus," which are our echo of his words, "Come unto Me," grow vacuous unless it is deeply taught who he is, and what it is to come to him. Simplicity is of thought. Emotionalism is a blur. Dogmatism is self-contradictory confusion. Therefore are emotionalism and dogmatism

congenial, and the most crudely paganized Christian doctrine is championed by the sensational revivalist. Those familiar with our shibboleths watch for that repudiated currency and think they have received values. Speak without the shibboleths, and the sophisticated complain of your obscurity, but the simple understand. For the simple soul cries out for meanings.

I quote what charity must believe a false report of a recent evangelistic utterance. "Then [the evangelist] gave the simplest definition of Christianity that could be desired. It was simply this: 'To believe in a God, to believe that Jesus lived and was the best teacher that ever lived, and the ideal man; and then to say, "Lord God, I believe in Jesus and accept him as my Savior for some unexplainable reason by faith."' " Here are indeed simplicities, but perverted and obfuscated into what confusions!

You who declare and live a gospel of meanings; this at least you are doing, in however limited spheres of influence, amid whatever mistakes and apparent failures—you are giving to our time a reasonable and human appeal. And when all the superstitions that infect the church shall have passed, your incorruptible seed of truth shall continuously plant itself forth in many souls and in the world's soul unto harvests of life eternal.

The desired change ought rationally to begin where it is slowest in appearing, in the Sabbath school, the nursery of the church, also the nursery of infidelity. Put yourself in the place of a little child, in indiscriminating ingenuousness open your mind to the instruction of the average Sunday-school teacher. If there were personal influence alone and no teaching beyond that, all might be well, and blessed are those Sunday-school teachers whose influence so overwhelms the teaching that the latter leaves no impression! But proceed to think of yourself, conventionally instructed, encountering the spirit of the age, as you must encounter it, in forms fine or crude, in halls of learning or in the common ways of men. The inevitable encounter has in the former case the better chance of success. In either struggle how unfair is faith's handicap! A woman's stronger spirituality and juster balance of intellectual, emotional, and moral qualities raises her relatively above the struggle, or gives her stronger forces against it. But to young manhood Christianity as they have learned

it is out of touch both with life's practical and ideal values. Some keep religion and the thought spirit of the time in separate confinements. Some dismiss the spiritual. Blessed are they who achieve the great synthesis!

Then may the church say, "I will come to terms with science; between culture and my dogmas let there be mutual concession. We will fit things together by adjustments on both sides." This is the mediating theology. Facility of this sort gives to certain writers and speakers repute with the uninstructed. And the result: the wholesome humiliation of less than contempt, neglect unmitigated by those who bear the spirit of the time.

"Then," say some in the church, "let us preach science, culture, and a popularized and applied idealistic philosophy. Just the strongest and finest development of the spirit of the time, is not this the gospel for the time? This which Christianity has had a great part in maturing, is not this Christianity, for our time at least?" The liberal churches are so called with good reason. They are liberal in their untrammelled accord with the spirit of the time.

No invidious comparison is intended between liberal and evangelical. The evangel is none the less evangel when found in "liberal Christianity," nor is the spirit of the age any less the spirit of the age when asserted in "the evangelical churches." But the solution achieved by those who do not clearly distinguish between the best in the spirit of the time and the gospel which is above all times meets some stubborn facts. One is that the attempt to identify Christianity with any stage of development of thought and life has ever miscarried, and the failure has been of a different sort from other defeats of Christianity. It has been failure of the principle itself, not of certain misconceptions which the principle can slough off. This is in the nature of the case. The universal and eternal which a gospel must be if men would rest in it cannot be the product of a process of change, nor can it be a passing phase of that process. This is Ritschl's great message, and none timelier has been spoken to any time. The objection to the attempt which sometimes calls itself "liberal Christianity," sometimes "the new theology," though these names may connote other conceptions, is sound, though it is often perversely urged in the interests of emotionalism and dogmatism. This is magnifi-

cently true: the power that saves from sin, that imparts a holiness beyond the range of virtue, and in which virtue finds its security, that irradiates the shadowed realms of finite life from the infinite glory, that sets the face of each man and of the race in aspiring certainty toward an illimitable consummation, does not derive from the spirit of any time, but is the innermost meaning of the spiritual universe welling up with continual adaptiveness to each time, in ever ampler incarnation, from the wisdom of the eternal mind, the blessedness of the eternal heart, the holiness of the eternal will.

The church's incompetency to lead the world's thought is part of her incompetency to mold the world's life. The former problem merges into the latter. The task is laid upon her by her very nature, as we have seen.

It was the realized ambition of the mediaeval church to regulate all institutions. She did their work as far as possible, embracing within ecclesiastical functions school and hospital—all social developments, all social remedies. When recognition of a distinct secular realm was forced upon her, she set its limits and controlled its laws. The gathered forces of humanity threw off these restrictions and won the secular field for secular forces. From this revolution there is no recovery. The church's ancient arrogance of demand has sunk to the querulous complaint which no man regards who has the world's work to do.

It is no humiliation to the church that her message is blasphemed, her spirit resisted. It is her glory to be the church militant. But she has fallen under this reproach: that the battle has passed away from her entrenchments, and she is unable to follow, while the warfares of humanity are fought without her participation.

One after another the elements of the world's life slip from the hands of the church. In politics there is separation of church and state, and it is probable that the last vestiges of the church's meddlingness will soon disappear everywhere. Education is released, not only in the public schools, but also in the colleges and universities. Whenever the church attempts a direction of the world's life, a secular organization speedily takes the work into more competent hands. Does she initiate a reform? She is ousted by some reform society which demands entire separateness in order to do the work

effectively. Does she found social settlements? She is dislodged for the sake of a practical social uplift. She undertakes to go "the way the Master went, by lane and cell obscure," and some secular fraternity has anticipated her, an embarrassed interloper.

This conviction is forced from every side, that this is the age of great secular tasks which demand secular forces for their accomplishment. To give instances is superfluous. The whole age is the consummated instance. This is the age in which all historic forces and all contemporary pressures have united in that new thing, the social consciousness. To restate all thought in terms of the social consciousness, to reorganize government, industry, human relations generally into realizations of the social consciousness—this task merges into itself every deed and desire in every rank of society, in field and forest, mine and workshop, newly annexed air and long-enslaved sea.

In the great secular passion the well-meant offices of the church seem superfluous. It is as when young men are at work upon a pressing task, with an old man puttering and fumbling and getting in the way. He was once the leader, but now the younger men are using appliances strange to him, and there is required a strength beyond his shrunken muscles. Anticipated in every endeavor, thrust aside here and there, not ungently, he aids the work at length by leaving it and going to sleep in the shade.

Is there not left to the church the religious realm? And that is the infinite. What is time to her who possesses eternity? What is the world to her who has God? But the infinite has its content in finite forms. The God with whom we have to do is God in his world. There can never be for us a spiritual life apart from those spheres of being through which we pass. To relegate the church to the purely religious is her extinction in the vast inane. Between that and service in the age present there is no standing-ground.

Intrepidly have some among us declared that the solutions of the problems which are the world's tasks are to be found in the thoughts of Jesus as recorded in the gospels. They have discovered this function for the church in the most profoundly secular of all ages: to teach and apply the principles of Jesus as the foundation principles of society and its progress.

However praiseworthy the sympathy of these men with the spirit of the time, and admirable their faith to meet demands upon it so strange, and however valuable the truth implicit in their endeavor, the outcome has been to set Christ at a greater distance from the secular. Jesus expected the establishment of the kingdom of Heaven on earth not by the evolution of secular forces but by the irruption of spiritual powers. His concern was not with the organization or progress of civilization. He hands back to us our social and economic perplexities as he gave back Caesar's coin in the porch of the temple. When we appeal to him to settle the inequalities of our times, we receive the answer: "Who made me a judge and a divider over you?" Indeed, the question arises whether Christ is not removed from the ruling interests of the present age, and whether Christianity is not the religion fitted for a stage of culture forever gone.

A saner view is coming through this unsecular conception of Jesus. This latest criticism has freed the tasks of our age from the last vestige of external authority, even from the dictation of Jesus and his gospel. It has restored Christ to the realm of sonship to the God whom he called Father. It is interpreting Christ's eschatological expectations as the declaration, expressed necessarily in the conception of his time and people, that the world's deliverance and perfecting can never be accomplished by secular forces, but only by spiritual powers working upon them. It has re-established the influence of Christ as an eternal revelation and potency, capable of subduing all things to itself, and of imparting the life of eternity to the world of time.

How essentially secular have been the efforts to shape secular life on the part of Catholicism and all her fading after-images, has been unmasked in the most scathing of Ritschl's diatribes. Essentially secular is every attempt of the church to restrain the secular. For this she does as a power competing with the secular. Her humiliating failure may result in this wholesomeness: that she fall back upon the eternal powers that inspire humanity, transform it, and vitalize it to attain God's purpose in it.

At this point of our reflection may we bring into prominence what was referred to incidentally at the beginning: the humiliation of

every element that enters into the secular progress of these times? All that this progress has attained or may hope to achieve is powerless to attain its desired result. The consciousness of this failure is spreading swiftly over the world, as when underneath the sun of late afternoon, a great cloud rushing on from the west darkens the distant hills, then wipes out the color from the nearer valleys, and will soon reduce to melancholy gray the sun-bathed slope on which we stand. Such a shadow has fallen most heavily upon the summits of French literature, recent and contemporary, and no other literature is so appreciative of advance in every realm of human effort. None is so sensitive to the significance of every *nuance* of human life. None sees the secular in so wide a scope, nor so limits itself to the secular. It is no boast, but a sane self-consciousness, that the spirit of Greece is best represented there. For the Greek is all alive to the human within the limits of humanity, to the world in the utmost capabilities of its separateness from the spiritual. Nowhere else as in the noblest French literature is there revealed so deep a sense of the emptiness and failure of the age. The same shadow spreads over Europe and America, touching the swift and mighty spirit of the time with premonitions of decadence. For our secular life, however different its form, is of the same stuff as the older civilizations. Like theirs is our swift expansion and our conquest of the material to human and partially ethical uses. Like theirs is our disillusion over that which we supposed would bring satisfaction and harmonious relations among men. Like theirs the fast-approaching weariness, decay, and disappearance. The civilizations of Babylonia and India are moved to meet us at our coming. They shall answer and say: "Art thou also become weak as we? Art thou become like one of us? How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the dawn!"

It is the unmingled spirituality of Jesus that makes him essential to the great secular constructive tasks of this time. The intrusion of secular culture into Jesus' thought and spirit would incapacitate him for redemptive power upon secular culture. The spiritual is ever indispensable to the accomplishment of secular tasks. It must not be a spirituality that stands in hostility to the secular. That cannot be, for it is not a competitor. But as spirituality it is undisturbed, uncontaminated by the secular. And the business of the

church in this, as in every age, is to maintain the spirituality of Jesus and to purify and inspire thereby the world's work as it yet independently evolves.

Whatever seems paradoxical in this position—and indeed we have here the ultimate self-contradiction of the universe, the final opposition of ideal and actual, personal and mechanical, infinite and finite—disappears in the practical test. The unmingled spirituality of Jesus makes him the Savior of exactly the world.

Indispensable, for example, is Jesus' faith in God's eternal purpose. Without that faith a man cannot work rationally upon the constructions of this time, and that which is not rational has no fixity nor permanence. I am asked to pour out my life for the amelioration of human suffering, for the furtherance of social progress. I am told that I am to ask no reward. Sufficient for me that by my effort the world will be so much the happier and better when I am extinct. But there is more than an egoistic interest in my remonstrance. A value fails to be preserved. And the demand for the preservation of my value is the demand for the preservation of the values for which I work; for what nonsense is this happier and better world apart from the men in each of whom the happiness and betterment has reality! For even if the social consciousness is a larger personality, it has no existence apart from the personalities uniting to form it. Labor and sacrifice for objects that have no permanence may indeed be the best thing I can do. But such an aim awakens no sufficient buoyancy, enkindles no adequate enthusiasm. For I must also reflect—and the final reflections to which I am driven are finally decisive of my action—that the whole life of humanity in the universe is but as a moment of its duration. The skies are strewn with burnt-out suns. And as I think of those, the end seems near when all that humanity has accomplished and suffered, all that its heroes have sacrificed, up to the cross of the Galilean, shall be as having never been, leaving in no real of form or thought, any track, trace, or remembrance, except there be that eternal purpose in which the spirituality of Jesus lived and moved and overcame.

The faith of Jesus in the eternal purpose of the Father is not indeed to be kept as it was in the mind of him, a child of his time as well as son of eternity. The faith of Jesus is not static, but dynamic. It

is absolute faithfulness to the faith of Jesus to postulate that, in the eternal purpose, the task of God's children in every age unfolds to a larger task, and that to one larger yet, and on to the illimitable resources of the infinite and the eternal. It is good that this age can make no such use of the fundamental faith of Jesus as would imply that faith too small for stages of progress as far from our present imaginings, as from our present habitation the starry cities of our conquests yet to be. In no idle dreams of the far-off do we fold our hands before the present phase of our labors. We accomplish all the confrontings of the here and the now in the strength of the eternal Spirit which here and now fulfils this phase in the purpose of the Father.

But not only is the spirituality of Jesus pervasive inspiration; it is direction also. For his faith was holy faith. The brutal fact whose very statement seems too brutal, is that the flesh, lusting not only against the spirit, but against every beauty and thought and accomplishment, was the power that dragged down the elder civilizations. The terrific lesson of Tennyson, the Galahad of our poets, in the *Idylls*, rather the *Epic*, of the King, is that the present age is liable to the same old shameful disruption. The increase of divorce is not a cause of the decay of family life, but a manifestation that the infamous double standard of morality is undermining the essential institution of society. These things mean, and the innumerable infamies that may be left unspoken signify, that all through the social order there must be a purity that the world has never attained yet, and for the lack of which every high hope of the ages has been deferred. The holiness of God in the purity of Christ lays its hand upon the leprous brow of humanity, as he says, "Be thou clean."

But the holiness of Jesus, it is separateness from every allurements which the world can bring against the spirit. It is the conquest over sense and finiteness, and only that victory can subdue all things to the uses of the spirit. It is that complete renunciation of every earthly good which puts all things under man's feet. The aspiration of the Hebrew prophets toward the consciousness of deity uncontaminated, unmodified by nature or actual humanity, has reached its goal in the Christ separate in his divine holiness. And as that Holy God alone could be conceived as Master of the world, so that

divine holiness of Christ conquers, purifies, redeems all things unto itself.

Closest of all things is the interpenetration of love. The tasks of this age are to be accomplished in the compassionate love of Christ. And as we look closer into the secularities of our time, compassionate love is the significance of them. To increase wealth and to learn the just distribution that is essential to its largest increase, to eliminate by science every unnecessary and repressive ill, to limit to the utmost of possibility sickness and pain and drudgery; in a word to make conditions most favorable to life worth the living by all men everywhere, just this is what our time has to do.

And to do this, compassionate love has to rise into appreciative love; the appreciation of the divine possibilities of every man and of the value of a social consciousness in which all weep with them that weep that all may rejoice together. For lack of love the attainments of the age are perverted into misery and luxury, which is worse, into the cries of the oppressed and the insensibility of those that exploit them, into new and fiercer hatreds. Against all oppression, especially against the less obvious forms of it, there must be compassionate love's indignations caught from the rages of the Christ. And the compassion, the indignation, the devoted sacrifice comes down from the heart of the Father through Christ's life of ministry and the cross of the world's redemption.

The gospel of the kingdom which Jesus announced and incarnated has many forms for its one principle, which is the subduing of all things by the spiritual. Christ's kingdom of Heaven for our age is to accomplish its great secular constructive tasks in the eternal faith, the unearthly purity, the compassionate and indignant love of the Son of God.

Must it be the church that fulfils the secular by the manifestation of the spiritual? It is the doing of this which makes the church. The kingdom of God in its contemporary tasks is advanced by united prayer, by searching together the mind and heart of Christ, so that whatever each receives may become the common possession, by the divine love formed in a common devotion to the Master. Though this kingdom may become conterminous with the church, it can never become identical with her, on earth or in heaven. When

the church embraces all beings that can become rational, it will still be humanity, for lack of a larger word, as receiving from its Lord the eternal potencies, transforming and fulfilling by them every evolution of thought and life through which God unfolds the latencies of his worlds. For this, humanity's highest task, upon which every other task depends, there is necessary the inevitable organization, for which the church is the best name known to our earthly language. The social consciousness of our day discloses more than ever before the necessary union of men in these, their highest functions.

Questions of method and application can be answered by a new branch of sociology, for which the thoughts written here are only prolegomena. Two considerations may lead us across the threshold.

The first is the necessity of a deepened consciousness of the church as a distinct institution of peculiar character. This self-consciousness of the church has been adequately stated in the final instructions and prayer attributed to Christ in the Fourth Gospel—correctly attributed to him in that these are the expression of his heart's desire: "That ye love one another, even as I have loved you;" and, "As Thou, Father, art in me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me." That believers in Christ should be united in the loving fellowship of the life which Christ lived in God and God in Christ, this is the urgent need of the world, especially in these days. The development of God's kingdom in the world must be in the guidance, rebuke, and inspiration of a fellowship in which the principles and spirit of the kingdom are the light which lighteneth all that are in the house. The church where every member lives for the welfare of all, imparts himself and his possessions to his brethren in equally inspired wisdom and self-sacrifice, where in the intimate and divine relation that makes it possible the joy of one is the joy of all, the sorrow of any the calling forth of the compassion of all, where all social relations are fulfilled in the spirit of the Master for divine aims and unto an eternal hope; this is the indispensable beginning of the church's ministry to our age; this is the hearth of that kingdom which enspheres all that men have to do. This church consciousness can break down sectarian divisions while retaining and uniting the attainments of

each one of them. It can produce in the leaders of the church, and in those whom they lead, a churchly loyalty that overwhelms all self-regards and makes practical all the higher loyalties. Here meet at their summits all sorts and conditions of men, and barriers of class and race and divergent civilization are in effective principle broken down.

The other consideration is this obvious one, that the practical work of the church addresses social conditions as they exist, or as they may arise. To shape these, she takes whatever of her principles are applicable in each case, or to state it more accurately, whatever manifestation of her spirit meets the crisis. In what several ways she shall make the application is a matter of experiment. Sometimes the church may work upon social conditions as an institution, sometimes through agencies which she has generated, or regenerated, sometimes only through the lives which she has touched and through her fiery message which is the word of God spoken through his prophets. In all these she is present in her love, indignation, and compassion. These detailed problems of the church are among the most insistent of the practical concerns of our day. Lack of devotion to this arduous task leaves the correctest principles barren; yet, for lack of fundamental principles, much of this work of hers as at present prosecuted is futile meddlesomeness. Elimination of interference with the secular order makes for the profoundest influence upon it.

Whether any of the few occurrences of the word church, attributed to Christ in the gospels, be authentic or not, makes no difference. From Christ the church unfolds inevitably, and the advancement of the kingdom of Heaven on earth, committed to all normal human functions, depends upon her for its true conception, derives through her its unwasting power.